

Amherst park use committee holds first meeting

By **SCOTT MERZBACH**, Staff Writer

Saturday, May 10, 2008

AMHERST - Planning Kendrick Park's future uses, from providing recreation such as ice skating to promoting local agriculture with an open-air public market, will be in the hands of a committee that will hold its first meeting Thursday.

Town Manager Larry Shaffer said he wants all ideas and functions for the 3-acre park at the north end of downtown to go through the filter of this 11-member committee and its four subcommittees, with a formal report anticipated by the end of the calendar year.

Since the town took ownership of the property in October 2006, Kendrick Park has seen the removal of the last home standing on it, the construction of an ice skating rink by the Department of Public Works this past winter and what could be last of the annual Boy Scouts' Christmas tree sale.

More changes are likely to take place in the coming months and years.

Shaffer told the Boy Scouts after their 2007 sale, during which they agreed to be assessed a \$1 per tree fee for use of the site, that they should find another place to sell their trees. Yet Shaffer notes that this doesn't mean that the Boy Scouts are permanently out of the picture for using the park where they have sold trees since the 1950s. Instead, Shaffer said there needs to be a process in which the committee determines the best use for the property, and finds out whether any other residents may wish to sell trees.

"What I'm trying to get at is that there is no protected class at Kendrick," Shaffer said.

And even though Shaffer has promoted the idea of a public market with the possible construction of a building to house it, the committee will make these decisions. "I want that to be discussed at the committee level," Shaffer said.

Shaffer is inviting members of the committee to visit Keene, N.H., on May 31 for a tour of Ashuelot River Park, coinciding with a tour of the city by the Amherst Shade Tree Committee to see how that city has approached the planting of trees along public ways.

"I want people to get a sense of what's possible, and see how people in other communities have handled the same issues," Shaffer said.

Ashuelot River Park is similar in that the park is near commercial development and includes both a gazebo and a bridge.

The four subcommittees will focus on recreation, history and aesthetics, nature and landscape, and the public market, and be staffed by Planning Director Jonathan Tucker, Conservation Director David Ziomek, Leisure Services and Supplemental Education Director Linda Chalfant and Tree Warden Alan Snow.

The formal role for the committee is to "study the recreational, scenic, historic and aesthetic uses of Kendrick Park" and "propose to the town manager recommendations consistent with the charge and the conditions of the Kendrick Park Trust."

The members of the main committee include Peter Blier, Patty Brandts, Harry Brooks, William Hutchinson, Christina Mata, Margaret Roberts, Marilyn Rodzwell, Liz Rosenberg, Susan Sheldon and Jeffery Tenenbaum.

The committee will meet the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

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